



The Last Night that she Lived

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

Hardly known to the outside world during her lifetime (she refused to set foot outside her house), Emily Dickinson is now accepted as a major American poet. Her poetry shows that she had a keen insight into life, love, nature and death.

1 The last night that she lived,
It was a common night,
Except the dying; this to us
Made nature different.

5 We noticed smallest things, -
Things °overlooked° before,
By this great light upon our minds
°Italicized°, as't were.

over het hoofd gezien

cursief gedrukt

That others could exist
10 While she must finish quite,
A jealousy for her arose
So nearly °infinite°.

(ver)eeuwig(d)

We waited while she passed;
It was a narrow time,
15 Too °jostled° were our souls to speak,
At length the notice came.

heen en weer geslingerd

She mentioned, and forgot;
Then lightly as a °reed°
Bent to the water, °shivered° scarce,
20 °Consented°, and was dead.

riet

trilde

gaf toestemming

And we, we placed the hair,
And drew the head erect;
And then an awful °leisure° was,
Our faith to regulate.

(vrije) tijd, gelegenheid

1a

Why are ordinary words italicized in a text?

1b

The poetess says that 'smallest things' were 'italicized, as it were.' So, what was the effect of the woman's approaching death on those surrounding her?

1c

What caused this effect?

2

What made the people surrounding the woman jealous of her?

3a

Why were the people at her deathbed unable to speak?

3b

At length it was the dying woman who spoke. What did she say?

4a

Which type of imagery does the poetess use to describe the woman's last moment?

4b

What does it express?

5

What does the word 'consented' in l.20 suggest?

6a

The poetess says that afterwards they had an 'awful leisure' 'to regulate' [their] faith. A dictionary gives the following meanings of the word 'awful': a) 'afschuwelijk'; b) 'indrukwekkend'; c) 'ontzagwekkend'; d) 'eerbiedig'. Which of these meanings applies/apply here, in your opinion? Account for your answer.

6b

Why did their faith have to be regulated again?